

Rare Mammal Observations 2006

By Jane E. Wiedenhoef and Adrian P. Wydeven

Abstract

Reports were received for 10 observations of 10 martens, 10 observations of 10 lynx, 86 observations of 87 cougars, and 30 observations of 33 moose. No reports considered to be possible wolverine observations were received. At least 5 different bull moose and 2 different cow moose were detected in northeast Wisconsin.

Methods

Observations were collected of rare mammals including timber wolf (*Canis lupus*), American marten (*Martes americana*), wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), cougar (*Puma concolor*), and moose (*Alces alces*). These observations were collected from agency field personnel or members of the general public in 2006. Observations of rare mammals were reported on a "Rare Mammal Observation Card" (Figure 1) which was sent to the DNR office in Park Falls, or were reported on the WDNR endangered mammal website (<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/forms/raremammal.asp>).

All observations were classified as "probable", "possible", or "not likely". These classifications were made by the reporting biologists or by the authors based on field evidence when available, level of documentation presented by the observer, or presence of additional evidence. Only "probable" and "possible" observations are reported here. Moose observations were usually listed as probable because they are relatively easy to accurately identify. Animals were classified as adults if they appeared to be ≥ 1 year old, but among carnivores, could include younger animals because adult size was achieved by 6 to 9 months. Animals less than 1 year old were called juveniles, and this included moose calves.

This report does not include tracks of rare mammals found on winter furbearer transects, which are reported in the August issue of Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys (Dhuey 2006). Wolf observations are not included in this report, and are also published in the August issue of Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys (Wydeven and Wiedenhoef 2006a).

Results & Discussion

Ten reports of probable or possible American martens were received from eight different counties (Table 1). This is the same number of reports as in 2005 (Wydeven and Wiedenhoef, 2006b). Three reports were from near, or close to, main marten range in Wisconsin (Figure 2). One report was received from Burnett County, close to known marten range in Minnesota. The DNR biologist in Iron County found marten tracks near Iron Belt, which may represent a dispersing animal from Michigan. Other reports may represent longer range dispersals from main marten range, or misidentifications.

No reports of possible or probable wolverines were received in 2006.

Ten reports were received of possible lynx observations from eight counties (Table 3). Again, the same number as received in 2005 (Wydeven and Wiedenhoef, 2006b). Lynx tracks were reported from Forest County, near Laona, in January. All other reports were observations of animals. Most reports were from northern Wisconsin, but 1 report was received from Adams

County and 1 from Juneau County in the central forest region of the state (Figure 3). At least 2 reports described characteristics that were a mix of lynx and bobcat, including the report from Juneau County. These reports may represent hybrids. Genetic analysis confirmed a lynx-bobcat hybrid died in Polk County in 2005 and lynx-bobcat hybrids have been confirmed in Minnesota (Schwartz et al. 2004). Small numbers of lynx are believed to move south into Wisconsin cyclically as prey populations decrease further north in their main range. Thus, Wisconsin, which only occasionally has small numbers of lynx, is a likely area for hybridization to occur.

Four reports of cougars in Wisconsin were listed as “probable” observations in 2006 (Table 4). Reports in Marinette and Vilas counties were made by natural resource professionals and descriptions were consistent with cougar characteristics. Field checks were not done and no supporting evidence was provided for confirmation. Reports in Bayfield and Rusk counties were made by private citizens and were field checked by DNR biologists. Field evidence was inconclusive, but was not inconsistent with the possibility of cougar. These “probable” observations are more likely cougar than other observations, but confirmation was not possible and misidentification is still a possibility.

Eighty-six observations were received of 87 cougars classified as probable or possible in 29 counties (Table 5). These numbers are somewhat higher than last year’s 75 reports (Wydeven and Wiedenhoef, 2006b). Cougar reports occurred throughout the state but were mostly from northern Wisconsin (Figure 3). Highest report rates of cougars were from Oneida and Vilas Counties with 12 reports each, and Marinette County with 8 reports. Most of the reports received represent observations that lack adequate evidence to either dismiss or suggest likely cougar. At least 16 more reports were classified as not likely (reports are not always recorded when verified to be not cougar). In one instance, field check of a reported carcass proved to be a coyote. In at least 3 instances, submitted photos proved to be bobcats. In other instances, photos were submitted of housecats and, increasingly, of cougars in other states. No presence of wild free-roaming cougars in Wisconsin was confirmed in 2006.

Thirty reports were received of 33 moose across 12 Wisconsin Counties (Table 6, Figure 4). Several observations were of the same animals. A cow was reported in Lincoln County in early July and a cow and bull were reported together in Langlade County in late September. At least some of the moose of unidentified sex probably also were cows. Reports of bulls may represent as few as 5 different bulls. In mid-September, reports and photos were received from Price County of a medium size bull with antlers beginning to palmate. Several observations of a big antlered bull were reported from Bayfield County in late September and in Ashland County in early October. A large bull and small bull were observed together in Vilas County in late September and subsequent reports of either a young bull or large bull were received from Vilas, Iron and Oneida Counties through the beginning of October. A young bull was reported in Iron County in early December. No calves were reported. Vilas County, with 6 reports, had the highest number of moose reports. Number of moose reports in 2006 was similar to 34 in 2005 (Wydeven and Wiedenhoef 2006b).

Remains of an adult radio collared female moose, 5155F, were recovered from northwestern Forest County in August, after pilots detected her radio signal on mortality mode. Estimates are that she may have been dead for about 4 months when bones were recovered, thus she probably died sometime in the spring. Moose 5155F was originally radio collared in Michigan and dispersed into Wisconsin in April 2001. Radio monitoring indicated that for the first couple years she traveled between Michigan and Wisconsin seasonally, but in recent years remained in Wisconsin year round. Currently, no radio collared moose are known to be residing in the state.

Literature Cited

- Dhuey, B. 2006. Winter Track Counts, 1977-2006. Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys, August 2006. 16 (5):6 pp. (<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/harvest/reports/wnttracks.pdf>)
- Schwartz, M. K., K. L. Pilgrim, K. S. McKelvey, E. L. Lindquist, J. J. Claar, S. Loch, and L. F. Ruggiero. 2004. Hybridization between Canada lynx and bobcat: genetic results and management implications. Conservation Genetics 5: 349-355.
- Wydeven, A. P. and J. E. Wiedenhoeft. 2006a. Gray wolf population, 2005-2006. Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys, August 2006. 16 (5): 16 pp. (<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/harvest/reports/06graywolfpop.pdf>)
- Wydeven, A.P., and J.E.Wiedenhoeft. 2006b. Rare mammal observations 2005. Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys. April 2006, 16 (2): 11 pp. (<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/harvest/reports/raremamobserv05.pdf>)

Figure 1. *Rare mammal observation card.*

Rare Mammal Observation Card	
(Use for Timber Wolf, Cougar, Lynx, Moose & Marten)	
<u>Observer:</u>	<u>Description of Animal:</u>
Name _____	Estimated Size _____
Address _____	Tail Length (stub, 1/4 body, 1/2 body, long as body): _____
Phone() _____	Track Size: Length _____ Width _____
Observers Background: _____	Coloration _____
No. & Species _____	Other Descriptions _____
Sex _____ Adult _____ Young _____	Photo Taken _____
<u>Location:</u> GPS _____ / _____	General Comments _____
Sec _____ Twn _____ Range _____	_____
County _____	_____
Road & Nearest Town _____	_____
Habitat _____	Reviewed by _____
Date & Time _____	Agency _____ Phone() _____
	Code: PB PS NL

Table 1. *Reported possible and probable observations of American marten in Wisconsin in 2006.*

Date	Number seen	Number tracks	Sec	Township	Range	County	Nearest Town	Agency ¹
02/08	-	1	24	46N	1E	Iron	Iron Belt	DNR
03/18	1U	-	~31	50N	4W	Bayfield	Bayfield	Private
03/28	1U	-	20	38N	8W	Sawyer	Couderay	DNR
04/05	1A	-	18	49N	8W	Bayfield	Port Wing	Nat. Res.
04/24	1A	-	7	41N	1W	Ashland	Butternut	Private
07/07	1U	-	1	39N	15E	Florence	Long Lake	Private
09/07	1A	-	20	33N	8W	Rusk	Island Lake	Private
09/09	1A	-	31	34N	2W	Price	Kennan	Private
10/07	1U	-	19	38N	19W	Burnett	Grantsburg	Private
11/22	1U	-	23	40N	3W	Sawyer	Park Falls	Nat. Res.

¹Agency for whom observer works

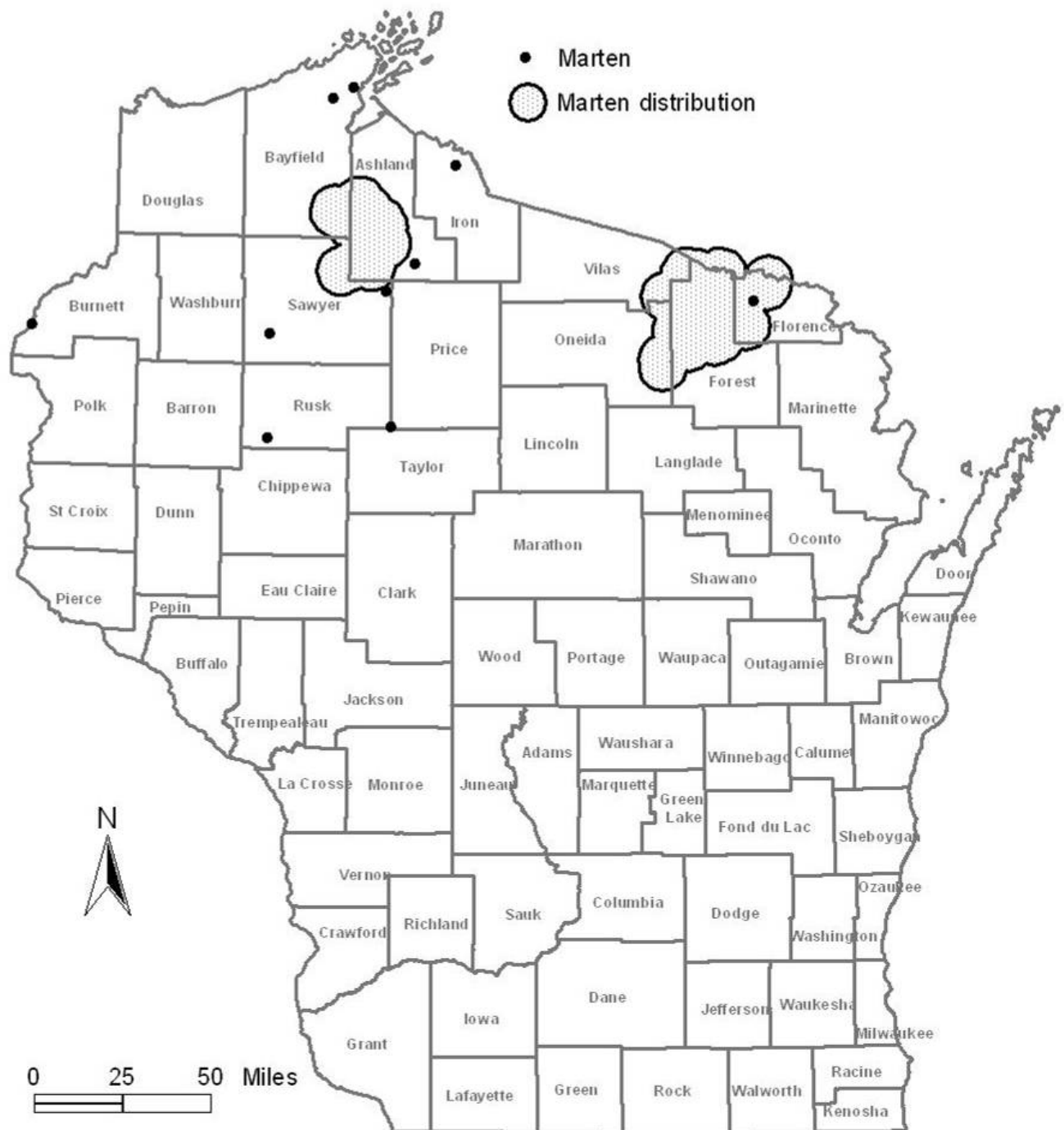


Figure 2. *Reported possible and probable marten observations in Wisconsin during 2006.*

*Marten distribution from: Jim Woodford, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources. Rhinelander, WI.

Table 3. *Reported possible and probable observations of lynx in Wisconsin in 2006.*

Date	Number seen	Number tracks	Sec	Township	Range	County	Nearest Town	Agency¹
01/12		1	32	36N	16E	Forest	Laona	Nat.Res.
01/23	1		15	42N	2W	Ashland	Glidden	Private
05/20	1		14	20N	6E	Adams	Rome	Private
07/14	1		11	50N	7W	Bayfield	Cornucopia	Private
07/15	1		12	50N	7W	Bayfield	Cornucopia	Private
10/06	1		14	17N	3E	Juneau	New Lisbon	Private
10/11	1		?	~48N	13W	Douglas	Superior	Private
10/27	1		25	25N	13E	Waupaca	Marion	Private
11/18	1		9	32N	7W	Chippewa	Holcombe	Private
11/20	1		13	45N	12W	Douglas	Solon Springs	Private

¹Agency for whom observer works

Table 4. *Reported probable visual observations of cougars in Wisconsin in 2006.*

Date	Number sighted	Sec	Township	Range	County	Nearest Town	Color	Agency¹
02/28	1UA	26	33N	21E	Marinette	Crivitz	Normal	Nat.Res.
08/15	1UA?	20	49N	4W	Bayfield	Washburn	Tawny	Private
08/29	1UA	1	40N	10E	Vilas	Eagle River	Lt. Brown	Nat.Res.
12/03	1UA?	22	34N	3W	Rusk	Hawkins	Unreported	Private

¹Agency for whom observer works

Table 5. *Reported probable and possible observations of cougars in Wisconsin in 2006, by quarter.*

County	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Total
Adams				1	1
Bayfield	1		4		5
Brown		1			1
Burnett		2	1		3
Chippewa		1			1
Columbia			1		1
Douglas		2			2
Florence		1	1		2
Forest	1	1	3		5
Iron		1			1
Juneau			1		1
Langlade			2	2	4
Lincoln			2		2
Marinette	1	2	4	1	8
Oconto			3		3
Oneida	1		8	3	12
Polk			1		1
Price	2		2	1	5
Richland			1		1
Rusk				2	2
Sauk			1		1
Sawyer			2	1	3
St. Croix		1 (sign)	1 (2 animals)		2
Trempealeau				1	1
Vernon			1		1
Vilas		2	10		12
Washburn		1	1	1	3
Washington		1			1
Wood		1			1
TOTAL	6	17	50 (51 animals)	13	86 (87 animals)

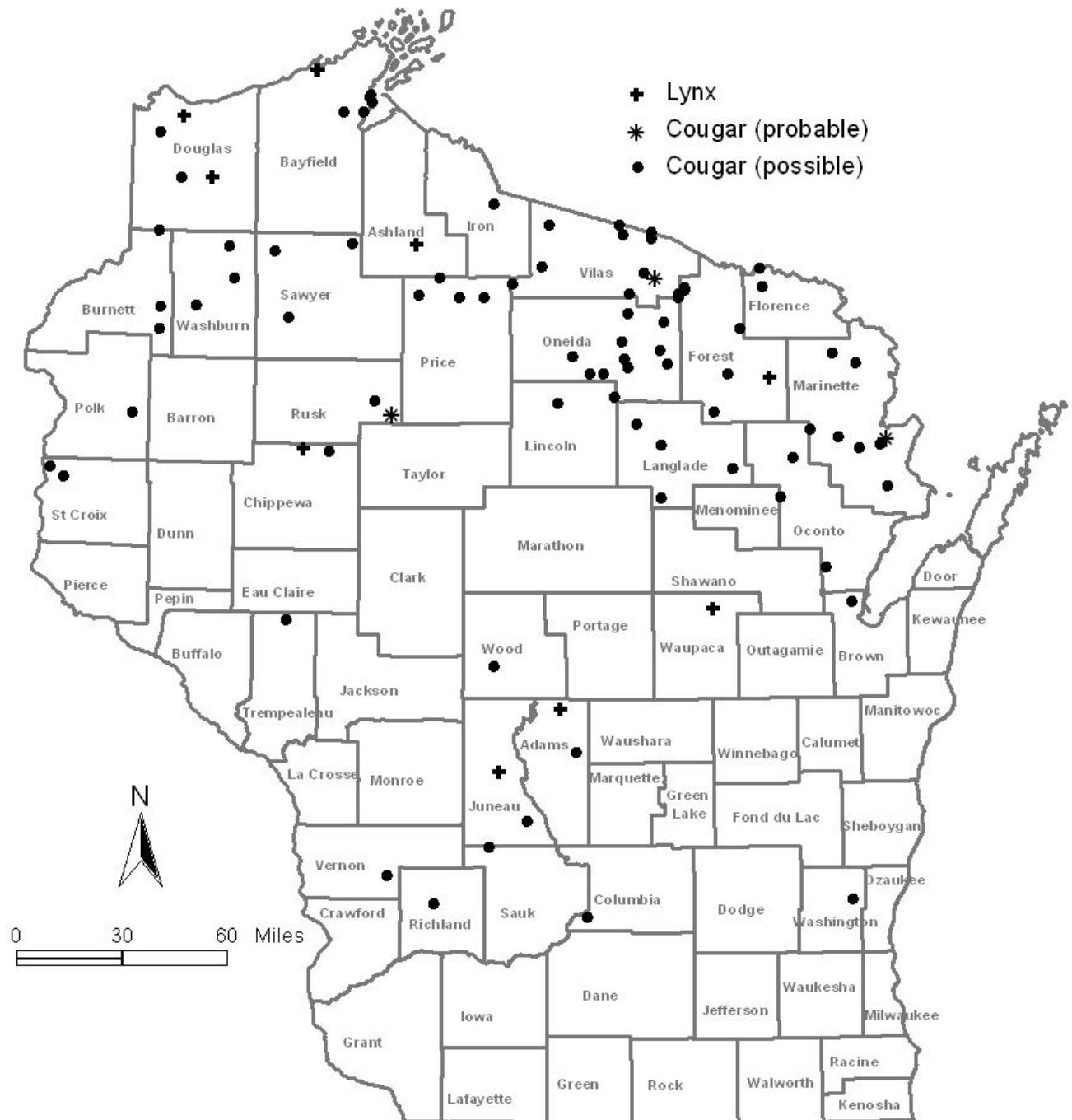


Figure 3. *Reported possible and probable lynx and cougar sightings in Wisconsin during 2006.*

Table 6. *Reported possible and probable observations of moose in Wisconsin in 2006.*

Date	Number sighted ¹	Tracks sighted	Sex	Sec	Township	Range	County	Nearest Town
02/01	2A?		U	20	32N	14E	Langlade	White Lake
02/23	1U		U	~17	44N	10W	Douglas	Solon Springs
04/24	1A		U	35	48N	2W	Ashland	Odanah
05/07		1U	U	23	44N	15W	Douglas	Moose Junction
06/14		1U	U	5-6	43N	2E	Iron	Mercer
07/02	1A		F	26	35N	5E	Lincoln	Tomahawk
08/07	1A		M	2	33N	11E	Langlade	Pearson
09/05	1A		U	7	40N	9E	Vilas	Eagle River
09/13	1A		M	29	35N	3E	Price	Brantwood
09/14	1U		U	5	44N	2W	Ashland	Mellen
09/16	1A		M	15	36N	1W	Price	Phillips
09/18	1A		M	33	39N	2W	Price	Phillips
09/21	1A		M	13	50N	5W	Bayfield	Cornucopia
09/22	1A		M	33	52N	4W	Bayfield	Little Sand Bay
09/23	2A		M,M	~10	42N	11E	Vilas	Land O'Lakes
09/24	1A		M	14	50N	4W	Bayfield	Bayfield
09/26	2A		M,F	22	34N	11E	Langlade	Elcho
09/28	1A		M	21	38N	8E	Oneida	McNaughton
09/28		1A	U	26	40N	9E	Vilas	Eagle River
09/29	1A		M	34	40N	7E	Vilas	Arbor Vitae
09/29	1A		M	4	39N	7E	Oneida	Woodruff
09/29	1A		U	25	40N	6E	Vilas	Woodruff
09/29	1A		M	25	40N	6E	Vilas	Woodruff
10/01	1A		M	33	42N	2E	Iron	Mercer
10/04	1A		M	23	46N	4W	Ashland	Marengo
10/17	1U		U	3	22N	3E	Wood	Pittsville
11/22		1U	U	1	40N	13E	Forest	Alvin
11/24		1U	U	22	39N	18E	Florence	Florence
12/09	1A		M	27	44N	3E	Iron	Pine Lake
12/13	1A		U	6	40N?	14E	Forest	Alvin

12 counties

¹A=Adult; J=Juvenile; U=Unknown

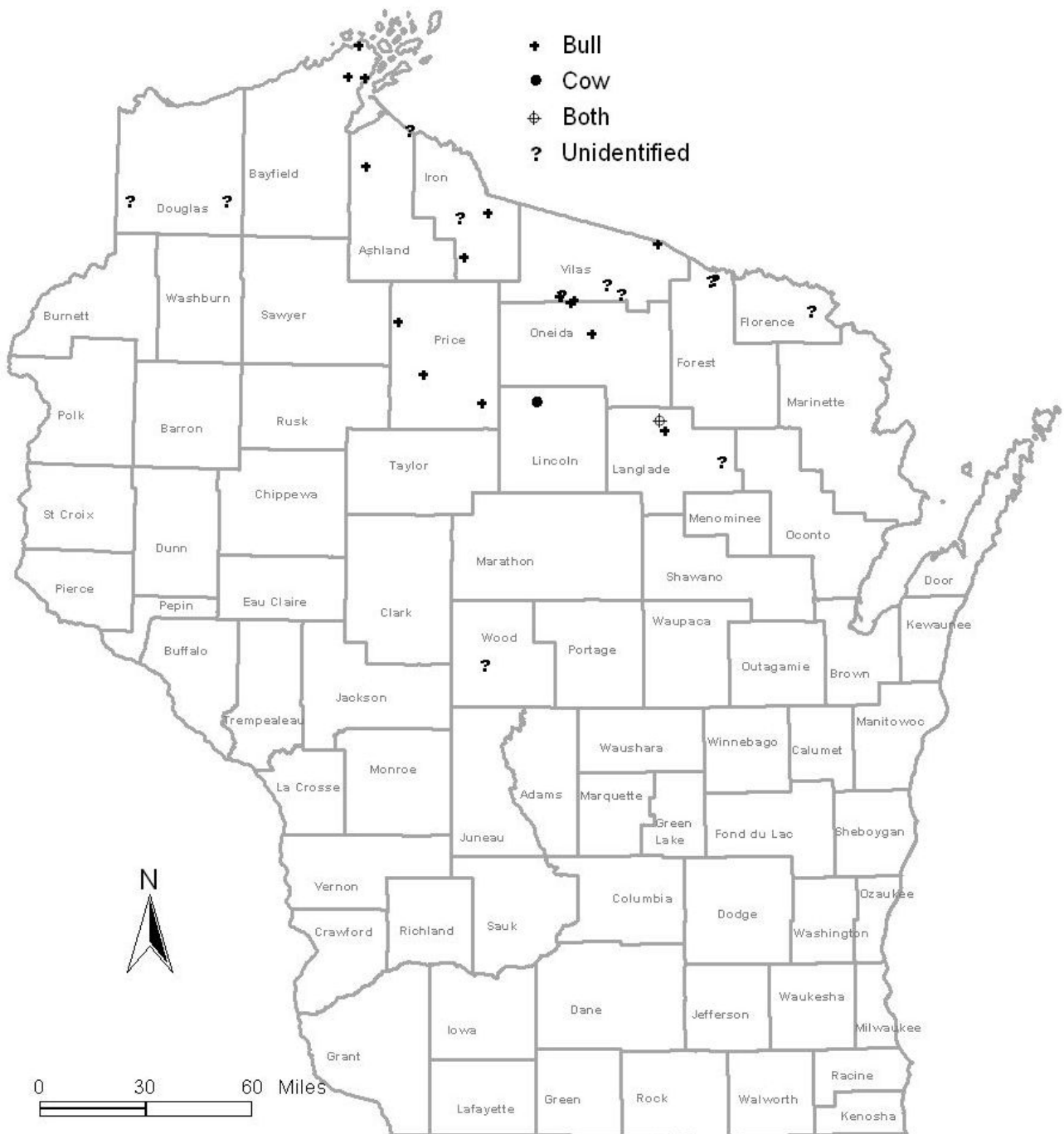


Figure 4. *Reported possible and probable moose observations in Wisconsin during 2006.*